

**RCW 31.45.030 License required—Small loan endorsement—
Application—Fee—Bond—Deposit in lieu of bond—Director's duties.**

(1) Except as provided in RCW 31.45.020, no check casher or seller may engage in business without first obtaining a license from the director in accordance with this chapter. A license is required for each location where a licensee engages in the business of cashing or selling checks or drafts.

(2) Each application for a license shall be in writing in a form prescribed by the director and shall contain the following information:

(a) The legal name, residence, and business address of the applicant and, if the applicant is a partnership, association, or corporation, of every member, officer, and director thereof;

(b) The location where the initial registered office of the applicant will be located in this state;

(c) The complete address of any other locations at which the applicant proposes to engage in business as a check casher or seller; and

(d) Such other data, financial statements, and pertinent information as the director may require with respect to the applicant, its directors, trustees, officers, members, or agents.

(3) Any information in the application regarding the personal residential address or telephone number of the applicant, and any trade secret as defined in RCW 19.108.010 including any financial statement that is a trade secret, is exempt from the public records disclosure requirements of chapter 42.56 RCW.

(4) The application shall be filed together with an investigation and supervision fee established by rule by the director. Such fees collected shall be deposited to the credit of the financial services regulation fund in accordance with RCW 43.320.110.

(5) (a) Before granting a license to sell checks, drafts, or money orders under this chapter, the director shall require that the licensee file with the director a surety bond running to the state of Washington, which bond shall be issued by a surety insurer which meets the requirements of chapter 48.28 RCW, and be in a format acceptable to the director. The director shall adopt rules to determine the penal sum of the bond that shall be filed by each licensee. The bond shall be conditioned upon the licensee paying all persons who purchase checks, drafts, or money orders from the licensee the face value of any check, draft, or money order which is dishonored by the drawee bank, savings bank, or savings and loan association due to insufficient funds or by reason of the account having been closed. The bond shall only be liable for the face value of the dishonored check, draft, or money order, and shall not be liable for any interest or consequential damages.

(b) Before granting a small loan endorsement under this chapter, the director shall require that the licensee file with the director a surety bond, in a format acceptable to the director, issued by a surety insurer that meets the requirements of chapter 48.28 RCW. The director shall adopt rules to determine the penal sum of the bond that shall be filed by each licensee. A licensee who wishes to engage in both check selling and making small loans may combine the penal sums of the bonding requirements and file one bond in a form acceptable to the director. The bond shall run to the state of Washington as obligee, and shall run to the benefit of the state and any person or persons who suffer loss by reason of the licensee's violation of this

chapter or any rules adopted under this chapter. The bond shall only be liable for damages suffered by borrowers as a result of the licensee's violation of this chapter or rules adopted under this chapter, and shall not be liable for any interest or consequential damages.

(c) The bond shall be continuous and may be canceled by the surety upon the surety giving written notice to the director and licensee of its intent to cancel the bond. The cancellation is effective thirty days after the notice is received by the director. Whether or not the bond is renewed, continued, reinstated, reissued, or otherwise extended, replaced, or modified, including increases or decreases in the penal sum, it shall be considered one continuous obligation, and the surety upon the bond shall not be liable in an aggregate or cumulative amount exceeding the penal sum set forth on the face of the bond. In no event shall the penal sum, or any portion thereof, at two or more points in time be added together in determining the surety's liability. The bond shall not be liable for any liability of the licensee for tortious acts, whether or not such liability is imposed by statute or common law, or is imposed by contract. The bond shall not be a substitute or supplement to any liability or other insurance required by law or by the contract. If the surety desires to make payment without awaiting court action against it, the penal sum of the bond shall be reduced to the extent of any payment made by the surety in good faith under the bond.

(d) Any person who is a purchaser of a check, draft, or money order from the licensee having a claim against the licensee for the dishonor of any check, draft, or money order by the drawee bank, savings bank, or savings and loan association due to insufficient funds or by reason of the account having been closed, or who obtained a small loan from the licensee and was damaged by the licensee's violation of this chapter or rules adopted under this chapter, may bring suit upon such bond or deposit in the superior court of the county in which the check, draft, or money order was purchased, or in the superior court of a county in which the licensee maintains a place of business. Jurisdiction shall be exclusively in the superior court. Any such action must be brought not later than one year after the dishonor of the check, draft, or money order on which the claim is based. In the event valid claims against a bond or deposit exceed the amount of the bond or deposit, each claimant shall only be entitled to a pro rata amount, based on the amount of the claim as it is valid against the bond, or deposit, without regard to the date of filing of any claim or action.

(e) In lieu of the surety bond required by this section, the applicant for a check seller license may file with the director a deposit consisting of cash or other security acceptable to the director in an amount equal to the penal sum of the required bond. In lieu of the surety bond required by this section, the applicant for a small loan endorsement may file with the director a deposit consisting of cash or other security acceptable to the director in an amount equal to the penal sum of the required bond, or may demonstrate to the director net worth in excess of three times the amount of the penal sum of the required bond.

The director may adopt rules necessary for the proper administration of the security or to establish reporting requirements to ensure that the net worth requirements continue to be met. A deposit given instead of the bond required by this section is not an asset of the licensee for the purpose of complying with the liquid

asset provisions of this chapter. A deposit given instead of the bond required by this section is a fund held in trust for the benefit of eligible claimants under this section and is not an asset of the estate of any licensee that seeks protection voluntarily or involuntarily under the bankruptcy laws of the United States.

(f) Such security may be sold by the director at public auction if it becomes necessary to satisfy the requirements of this chapter. Notice of the sale shall be served upon the licensee who placed the security personally or by mail. If notice is served by mail, service shall be addressed to the licensee at its address as it appears in the records of the director. Bearer bonds of the United States or the state of Washington without a prevailing market price must be sold at public auction. Such bonds having a prevailing market price may be sold at private sale not lower than the prevailing market price. Upon any sale, any surplus above amounts due shall be returned to the licensee, and the licensee shall deposit with the director additional security sufficient to meet the amount required by the director. A deposit given instead of the bond required by this section shall not be deemed an asset of the licensee for the purpose of complying with the liquid asset provisions of this chapter. [2005 c 274 § 255; 2003 c 86 § 3; 2001 c 177 § 11; 1995 c 18 § 4; 1994 c 92 § 276; 1993 c 176 § 1; 1991 c 355 § 3.]

Effective date—2001 c 177: See note following RCW 43.320.080.

Effective date—1993 c 176: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect immediately [April 30, 1993]." [1993 c 176 § 2.]

Examination reports and information from financial institutions exempt: RCW 42.56.400.